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*GOD IN ALL AND OVER ALL*

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Each generation and each century seems to have its own peculiar danger and its own peculiar genius. The Christian church, for example, was confronted in the early centuries with the dangerous and subtle opposition of Greek thought; and the genius of the church victoriously faced this opposition with that spiritual interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus which we find in the Fourth Gospel. Later, in the sixteenth century, the danger appeared in a materialistic church, and the genius of the Reformation was unmistakably present in the religion of the spirit and the liberty of the individual. In the eighteenth century the peril was seen in dogma, or irreligion, or a tepid morality; and the opposition developed Pietism in Germany, Methodism in England, and the Great Awakening in New England. Every century appears to be led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil in some new guise, and is compelled to find the apt, victorious text in Scripture.

And yet, whatever be the temptation and whatever be the triumphant reply, the issues are always the same,—sin and salvation. In the Greek myth of Proteus, when that old man of the sea was grappled with, he assumed most horrible and terrifying forms. Now he was a fire, now a wild stag, now a screaming sea-bird, now a three-headed dog, now a serpent. Sin is always protean, and presents to the wrestling centuries new and terrible aspects. What, then, we ask, seem to be the principalities and protean powers against which we are compelled to wrestle? I venture to think they may be suggested in one word, Materialism.

This is most noticeable in our economic life. Within a very short period, virtually since 1870, unprecedented fortunes have been made in America. Through all classes the great desire for money has spread like fire. The college man who enters the

broker's office on Wall Street and the Greek immigrant who starts a fruit-stand on the sidewalk are both in search of wealth. America has become synonymous with money. All this is so well known that there is no necessity for any lengthy exposition of it. I wish only to emphasize—what any careful student of events well knows—that this great material prosperity has produced a striking capacity to see the material and a corresponding incapacity to see the ideal.

Nor is this materialism confined to our economic life. For one reason and another much of the keenest thinking of our time is materialistic. The doctrine of the superman and the theory of the survival of the fittest are the stars in the intellectual firmament of many students. A philosophy like that of Nietzsche influences the man in college, in the settlement house, and in the café. The magazines with their adulation or their execration of the great masters of wealth, the theatre with the drama of Sudermann, Hauptmann, and Pinero, give prominence to the value of the material and the futility of the ideal. Christianity is openly ridiculed as a system which perpetuates the socially unfit, violently attacked as the defender of an unjust industrial system, or silently disregarded as an obsolete institution. Not only without the churches but also within our fellowships we find altogether too often the absence of that capacity to see the ideal, and to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The congregation in more than one church has become the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Even in the church of a great spiritual leader the mid-week service will be deserted for the opera. In the summer the city church is closed, while the country club is open. Our athletic men and maidens speak much of God's out-of-doors, and quote the Christ who went into the country, who climbed the hills, who knew the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. They do not seem to recollect, however, the rather striking fact that the only habit known to us in the youth of Christ is his custom of going into the church of his fathers on the Sabbath-day. The plain fact is that many people of church-going ancestry are not going to church. A group of young business men in Boston, who happen to belong to the same organization, may be taken as representatives of a large class.

Their fathers were deacons, elders, members of the church, and ministers. Only two out of two dozen in this group attend church. Here are thoroughly good men, actively interested in civic questions, good citizenship, and the body politic, but they are not interested in church attendance. They are proud, and justly proud, of their fathers, but they should remember that even all these, though they obtained a good report through faith, obtained not the promises, God having provided some better thing for their descendants, that the fathers without the sons should not be made perfect. At the bottom of all this feeling, whether we find it in the churches or out of the churches, whether in economic or intellectual forms, is, I am compelled to think, the belief consciously or unconsciously entertained that the things which are seen are of more value than the things which are unseen. Food and raiment are more to be desired than righteousness and the beauty of holiness, because people see very clearly the value of things which perish, and very darkly the unsearchable riches of Christ. For I dare to believe that if men can see God in the churches, they will come to church. To see God in the churches! To make God a visible reality! That is the awful task to which the ministers commit themselves. Without this vision the people turn to things which are visible, temporal, sensual. This is materialism. Whether you find it in economic greed, injustice, and brutality, in social discontent, hypocrisy, and beastliness, in intellectual doubt and spiritual indifference, it is materialism,—the peculiar peril of our time and our country.

To this evil genius of our country the religion of the present opposes two emphatic ideals: social and spiritual. By the social ideal, I mean the proclamation of social justice between employer and employed, capital and labor, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, for we are all brethren and we must all live under the shadow of a great name. By the spiritual, I mean emphasis on the authority of the spirit rather than the spirit of authority. Any one familiar with the young men in the ministry and the congregation will again and again note the appearance of these two aspects in the religious utterance of our time,—social justice and the authority of the spirit. No other-worldly justice can be preached as a compensation for injustice in this world. No

mansions in the sky will be accepted as a substitute for intolerable rents on earth. "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages and giveth him not for his work." This prophetic preaching constitutes the ancient and modern message of social justice.

The other message of our time is the authority of the spirit. The character of the last century was the spirit of authority, whether it was found in science, or religion, or ecclesiastical councils. Today the preacher turns to the authority of the spirit. Of course the peril here is the old danger of antinomianism, that Serbonian bog where armies whole have sunk. But into that disaster the intelligent and humble preacher who governs his thought by the classic experience of the past and by communion with the eternal will not fall. Such a source of authority may be called mystical, spiritual, idealistic. Whatever we call it, it is that region above time and space where all leaders in spiritual guidance, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, have conferred not with flesh and blood, but with the eternal God. It is, above all, the region from which Jesus Christ our Lord drew that power and influence so impressive to men that they remembered him as one having authority. This capacity to speak as seeing him who is invisible, this ability to make the ideal a more glorious reality than food and raiment, this genius for the mystical approach to God, constitutes the authority of the spirit.

Now over these two aspects so conspicuous in the thought of our time are the two eternal ideals of the kingdom of God and the vision of God. The kingdom of God is the ideal which looms above the question of social justice, the question of man's relation to man. The vision of God is the ideal which hovers above the religion of the spirit, the question of man's relation to God. It is of the latter that I wish to speak more particularly here.

The thought of God's relation to the world which appeals convincingly to our generation has two mutually complementary aspects,—God's pervasive indwelling in the world and God's supreme purpose of perfection for the world.

God is present in our universe, for the world is the work of his hands and the firmament is his handiwork. God is present in

all men as the inward light which leads them into the eternal. This present help and inward light is, as John Woolman said, "deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any when the heart stands in perfect sincerity." This inner light has been the source of grandeur in prophet and priest, disciple and apostle, saint and martyr. This inner light was so infinitely real in Jesus that in his spirit there was neither darkness nor shadow of darkness. Our highest prayer must be, "May the light that was in Jesus be in us also!" This conception fits a world in the making, in the rough,—a growing, struggling, fighting, glorious world. It takes into account all the facts, and admits the presence of evil as well as good. It believes that God is the maker and builder of this unfinished world. He is toiling for the increase of the good and the destruction of the evil. As John Scotus said, "There are as many unveilings of God as there are saintly souls." This light shining in the darkness of our world I take to be the manifest presence of God.

It is not enough, however, to know God only as the power which works in the world for good; for this leaves the great question of finality hanging in the air; it does not tell us whether in the long run good or evil will triumph. It does not "live," as Thomas à Kempis would say, "under the shadow of a great name." It needs to be completed by the conviction that in this struggle the sovereign will of God is engaged to make the good triumph over evil, that in the universe there shall be peace. This conception of God, then, recognizes him, first, as the divine light shining in the darkness, even if the darkness comprehends it not; and secondly, as the infinite Father, who has made it his purpose that in this world there shall be peace.

Let me now take this doctrine and submit it to the tests prescribed by the men of our time, and employed by Professor Drown in his article, "A Basic Principle in Theology."<sup>1</sup> These tests are two: first, is it true? and secondly, does it work?

Regarding the truth of any doctrine, a large party in Christendom today would declare a doctrine to be true because it received the sanction of Holy Church under the infallible guidance of her divinely appointed representation of God. And a large num-

<sup>1</sup> Harvard Theological Review, July, 1909.

ber in our Protestant communion, forgetting their origins and slipping into the error of the old church, would declare a doctrine true because "olde bookes" said so. There is, however, an increasing and significant tendency to turn neither to ancient hierarchies nor venerable books, but to life itself. Is it true, he asks, of life? is it true of man? is it true of the perfect man, Jesus Christ? Man is still the measure of all things, even of the eternal. And Jesus Christ, the perfect son of man, is the highest measure of God. If the doctrine is true of him, it is true of God. If a doctrine is not true when applied to men, we reject it as false when applied to God. What is bad in me cannot be good in Him. If it is wrong for the Greeks to lie, steal, murder, and commit adultery, it is also wrong for the gods on Olympus. If it is wrong for the Jews to be men of wrath, war, and blood, it is also wrong for Jahveh. Not through imperfect, but through perfect, humanity shall we venture to measure our conceptions of the infinite. Through Jesus Christ we have our perfect measure of God.

Is this doctrine, then, true of Jesus? In my belief, it is. We find in him these two values, that of the earthly life and of the eternal spirit. The former we have in the historic Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, the man who became obedient to time and space, who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, who continually went about doing good, who had compassion on the multitudes, who suffered little children to come unto him, who died for us on the cross. That brave and radiant figure, full of grace and truth, will never fade on the canvas of a world's remembrance. And the church has followed a wise instinct when through symbol and through sacrament, through the cross and the communion, she has preserved in the minds of men this picture of the Lord Jesus. "Remember the Lord Jesus—how he said—how he lived—how he died,"—these were the words of the disciples and apostles. This labor of the church has been a ministry of remembrance. "Remembering the Lord Jesus,"—that very often describes with deep fidelity the lives of saints and martyrs, the work of holy men who wrought a visible recollection in stone and wood, in sound and color, and the toil of scholars who gave their lives in order that this memory might not pass away from

the earth. The church has always acted over again this divine life in the world.

Yet if the life of Jesus had only this value, and if the work of the minister and priest were only to react and reproduce this life, we should not be saved in our sincerest moments from profound despair. What help is it to a man in misery just to know that one man found peace that passeth understanding? What help is it to a man in sin just to know that one man never yielded to temptation? If there were nothing more than that, life would be torture. It would be just as if I were sinking into the depths of the sea, and, while I gasped and struggled, heard above me sweet voices chanting in solemn music and in ancient words—“*in saecula saeculorum*”—that years and years ago one man passed triumphantly through these waters. As a matter of fact, the Hamlets and Othellos and Lears in real life are not to be found as a rule in the boxes or the orchestra circle. They are outside in the night and the darkness, in the tenement and the broken home. The people in the theatre, however Aristotelian may be their motives, are simply spectators. Now in some such capacity many people attend the churches,—to see a great, divine drama. And if such is the chief end in the worship of God, then of course the drama should be given the best staging and the best cast. But the church must be more than an Oberammergau for the presentation of a Passion Play. Such a service will attract the tourist, but not the sinner. The church will never save the lost, if the service, however noble and splendid, is only a dramatic reproduction of an historical episode. It must be more than that. The life of Christ has more than an historical value. His spirit transcends time and space. And this I feel to be the source of inexpressible riches in the life of Christ. The spirit that was in Jesus must be in every man if his kingdom is to come on earth. And our joy is found in the sight of this eternal spirit forever moving in the hearts of men. The spirit that was in Jesus was manifest in the Apostolic Age, in the days of Augustine, in the century of Saint Francis, in the glory of the Reformers. He has never left us nor forsaken us. He has appealed through different centuries to different men,—to the Platonist



in the first century, to the Pragmatist in the twentieth,—to the Oriental and Occidental, to the Roman and the Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free. This mystic spirit, triumphant over time and space, into whose communion we all desire more and more to come, I call the transcendent value in the life of Christ.

Since, then, these two values are true of Jesus, I conclude that they are also true of God. For we have agreed that the perfect man Christ Jesus shall be the measure of all things, even of God who is all in all. Therefore we feel the doctrine to be true. For it has been submitted to the test of life, even the excellency of the abundant life as found in Jesus.

If this doctrine has passed the bar of truth, may I now submit it to the second requirement, "Does it work?" This doctrine of God is, I think, peculiarly adapted to our time, because a strong, sincere feeling among our younger men welcomes the pragmatic description of the world. Such a doctrine as I have given squares with pragmatism. For through this vision of God we see a world still in the making, a world where the good and evil, the holy and the unholy, the light and darkness, struggle for dominion. Such a description appeals to the brave man, and he welcomes with joy the thought that in this world God is laboring to bring the good into complete and perfect triumph. He hears his footsteps behind the curtains of sweet light, and rejoices in the struggle because he knows the Lord his God will fight for him. He receives with reverence the belief that God immanent in the world is also transcendent; that his purpose is from everlasting to everlasting, and that he will bring this universe into his peace. This conception of God is therefore peculiarly adapted to that intellectual mood we call Pragmatism.

Moreover it possesses another value in adaptability: it opens the mystic approach to God. The man who lives in a world in which God is at once the eternal spirit, in whom we live and move and have our being, and the infinite purpose, to whose fulfilment the whole creation steadily advances, lives in a world where the highways to God's presence are open and unobstructed. No irresistible grace opens those highways only to the elect; no dogmas nor holy church dooms to eternal hell the multitude of

the damned; no one book contains the only revelation of the infinite spirit; no one institution, however ancient its reverberating service, and however gorgeous its imposing sacerdotalism, can absolutely govern that approach. This approach is open to all who hear and obey the spirit, which from the beginning has spoken in the hearts of men. This approach is an historic highway in Protestantism, and especially to those Protestant societies who laid the foundations of these American colonies. For here, especially in the northern colonies, as Burke said in his great oration, was observed "the dissidence of dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." Now Protestantism, and especially that which has been called most dissident, is a protest against the obstructed approach to God. No worship of graven images and no idolatry of the mass, no bishop and no priest, no king and no pope, no infallible book, shall stand between man and God. Protestantism in its purity stands for the open door. And Protestantism has been most vital and Puritanism most vigorous when this free, unobstructed, mystic approach to God has been so open and so clear to those who walked therein that God was very near to them. The nearness of God! This is the source of Jonathan Edwards's power, the right door into a true appreciation of that great soul. This is the light which shines on every page in the journal of John Woolman. Both men felt supremely that God was nigh to them. To the Puritan in New England, the sovereignty of God was over all, in all, and through all. To the Quaker in Pennsylvania the indwelling of God, the inner light, made irresistible appeal. Whether they felt that Holy Presence through the sovereign will or the inward voice, they were alike in the essential fact of nearness to God. Both were mystics; both fashioned for their souls a road whereon only the spirit was their guide. Over their lives, over Protestantism at its best, over Puritan and Pilgrim, Baptist and Methodist, Quaker and Moravian, Huguenot and Presbyterian,—over all that "dissidence of dissent and that Protestantism of the Protestant religion" which established the American colonies, may rightly be inscribed what Cotton Mather in the *Magnalia* said of Thomas Shepard, "a trembling walk with God."

This capacity has been the genius of our land and our relig-

ion. This spirit is our rich endowment and our truest inheritance. And it has not vanished from our people. There is alive in the rising generation a great desire to journey on this mystic path to God, to know the reality of his presence, to win the Holy City and to find the Holy Grail. To this spirit in our youth, the thought of God I have attempted to set forth is peculiarly attractive, because it enables theology to give spacious utterance to an increasing desire and an inherited genius. The doctrine, then, passes successfully before that question, "Will it work?" It will work, and enter into the reward of its labor, because it is adapted to pragmatism, which is the intellectual mood of our generation, and to mysticism, which is the genius of our Protestantism.

With deference I submit this attempt to define the ideal which hovers above the spiritual longing of our day. Under the guidance of this idealism we may confidently confront the materialism of our country. This is our peculiar problem. This is the character of the battle in our corner of the field. And this indicates that however different may be the incidents of this long struggle, yet the essentials in the religions of the present and the past and the future are the same, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Only the symbols of that spirit change from century to century. For we wrestle with protean powers, and to the evils of the time we oppose a religion whose spirit is eternal and whose refuge is the everlasting God.